

Legislation introduced to permanently protect Canada's Pacific North Coast from oil spills

For Immediate Release

Dec 13, 2010

Vancouver - Environmental groups are once again applauding MPs who are taking the necessary steps to secure a permanent tanker ban on Canada's Pacific North Coast. A Private Member's Bill was tabled in the House of Commons today by Vancouver Quadra Liberal MP Joyce Murray, proposing a ban on crude oil tanker traffic in Hecate Strait, Dixon Entrance and Queen Charlotte Sound.

The Private Member's Bill echoes the NDP motion calling for a legislated tanker ban that was passed in the House of Commons last week with a vote of 143/138. All opposition parties voted for the motion while the government voted against it.

"Last week's vote proves that a majority of our Members of Parliament support a legislated tanker ban on our Pacific North Coast," said Eric Swanson, Dogwood Initiative. "Ms. Murray's bill gives us clear, unambiguous legislation to protect B.C.'s fishing and tourism industries, in line with what coastal communities and First Nations have already declared."

The legislated ban on tankers is supported by over 80 First Nations, the federal Liberals, NDP, and the Bloc Québécois. In a poll conducted in March, 80 percent of British Columbians supported a ban on tankers on the Pacific North Coast.

The most imminent threat to the coast is Enbridge's Northern Gateway Pipeline proposal, which would carry tar sands oil to a supertanker port at Kitimat and bring 225 oil tankers per year to B.C.'s North Coast in order to serve markets in China. Enbridge is relying on the federal joint review to determine the project's feasibility. However, support for the tanker ban is proving to be a stumbling block, and critics see the review process as full of limitations.

"Frustration with the Joint Review Panel process is mounting," says Nikki Skuce, ForestEthics. "It's seen as a waste of time, energy, and money because its recommendations can be ignored by the government, its decisions are virtually guaranteed to be challenged in the courts, and it doesn't respect the rights of First Nations."

"The call for a tanker ban is about protecting the ocean and the coast from catastrophic oil spills," said Jennifer Lash, Living Oceans Society. "We do not want to fight pipeline proposals year after year. A legislated tanker ban is the best way to provide certainty for coastal residents."

"The Private Member's Bill will need to pass through debate and votes in both the House of Commons and the Senate before becoming law," says Josh Paterson, West Coast Environmental Law Association. "We hope that all parties will work together to ensure this bill moves through the Parliament quickly and efficiently. With this much support in the House of Commons, it should be a priority to get it passed."

"It's great to see leadership from the Liberal and NDP MPs in British Columbia who are obviously listening to the majority in the province," says Jennifer Rice, T. Buck Suzuki Foundation. "Our coastline is an international treasure that deserves to be protected from oil spills forever."

Contact:

Jennifer Lash, Living Oceans Society, 250-741-4006
Eric Swanson, Dogwood Initiative, 250-858-9990
Josh Paterson, West Coast Environmental Law Association, 604-601-2512
Nikki Skuce, ForestEthics, 778-210-0117
Jen Rice, T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation, 250-600-2455



Healthy Oceans. Healthy Communities.

FORESTETHICS

